

March 31, 2004

### **District Health Honors Local Health Heroes**

As part of celebrating National Public Health Month in April, South Central District Health announced today that a Wood River Valley attorney, a youth group from the Mini-Cassia area, and a rural dance and fitness studio are being honored as 2004 Health Heroes.

The 2004 Health Heroes Awards were presented today during the South Central District Board of Health meeting in Twin Falls. Nominations were submitted by the community, and selection of Ketchum attorney Reginald R. Reeves, the Mini-Cassia HealthNet Coalition from the Burley/Rupert area, and the Main Motion Dance and Fitness Studio in Oakley as Health Heroes was based on the breadth of their service and their on-going commitment to improving the health of south central Idaho residents.

Winner of the award for Adult Health Hero was Reginald "Reggie" Reeves. Mr. Reeves is an attorney with practices in both Ketchum and Idaho Falls, and he helps link people with limited resources to the health services they need. He has organized offices throughout Idaho to help people with low incomes receive free medications from pharmaceutical companies and he retains a staff of volunteers to help people fill out forms for the medicines. Mr. Reeves is also very involved with helping veterans obtain medical care, hearing aids, and monetary benefits. He works with Angel Flight to help children with cancer get to their medical appointments or receive hospital care. Mr. Reeves helps disadvantaged people in the Wood River valley obtain food and clothing, and he works through the Ketchum/Sun Valley American Legion to provide monthly dinners for community members. Mr. Reeves has donated 24 gallons of blood to the American Red Cross, a commitment he began while a student at the University of Idaho. He was recently inducted into the U. of I. Alumni Hall of Fame. And his work extends beyond the borders of the United States. He has helped start and support two schools in Guatemala, as well as sending donated dental equipment to that country.

"Mr. Reeves' dedicated work to link community members with the health care services they need brings hope and help to his community, and he serves as an inspiration to all of us," said Dr. Donald Bard, Chairman of the Board of Health.

Selected as the Youth Health Hero was the Mini-Cassia HealthNet Coalition. The Coalition has made numerous contributions to the communities of Burley and Rupert over the last year. Members of the youth group worked with police officers to promote seatbelt usage and safety. They held bicycle safety inspections along with local law enforcement agencies and provided bike helmets for all youth that attended. They have sponsored a pregnancy prevention billboard contest for the last four years. They hold workshops about alcohol and drug prevention; teach youth how to build assets in their communities; provide 107 Lunch Buddies to mentor and share lunch twice a month with area grade school children; sponsor four local children for Christmas; sponsor a commodity drive to benefit the Helping Hands Mission; and host a weekly radio talk show to promote positive activities in the community. The Coalition is sponsored jointly by Cassia Regional Medical Center in Burley and Minidoka Memorial Hospital in Rupert.

"The Mini-Cassia HealthNet Coalition has made numerous accomplishments over the last year, all of which helped the youth of Burley and Rupert make healthier lifestyle choices," commented Dr. Bard. "One of their most important accomplishments is the connection they have

helped forge between youth and adults. The Mini-Cassia HealthNet Coalition is truly a success story and an asset to the Mini-Cassia region.”

Winner of the Corporate Health Hero award was the Main Motion Dance and Fitness Studio in Oakley. Five years ago, sisters Annalee Elquist and Tasha Payton opened a dance and fitness studio in the small town. Even with the uncertainty of opening a business of this type in a rural community, the women decided the community would benefit from the access to exercise classes. And they were pleasantly surprised. The dance and gymnastics classes have been big hits with the area’s children, and the fitness and yoga classes are equally successful with adults. Because of the innovative risk-taking of Ms. Elquist and Ms. Payton, the citizens of Oakley now have a place to exercise.

“Through your promotion of the benefits of fitness and exercise, the Main Motion Dance and Fitness Studio has helped empower community members to make healthier lifestyle choices,” said Dr. Bard. “Your work has changed the lives of many Oakley residents for the better.”

This is the sixth year District Health has recognized the contributions made by area individuals and groups to the health of south central Idaho residents. Award recipients in 2003 included Adult Health Hero Gooding Police Chief Paul Brown who volunteered his time to the Gooding County HealthNet Coalition, served as a role model in the local Lunch Buddy program, and worked to improve the safety and health of the residents of Gooding. The Youth Health Hero Award in 2003 went to the Blaine County Teen Advisory Council (BC TAC). Members of the youth group worked with the Blaine County School District to introduce Youth Development Assets into the school system as the character education program and provided Asset education to community members. And the 2003 Corporate Health Hero was the Twin Falls Times-News, selected for its promotion and support of youth as the community’s most valuable resource.

Honorees in 2002 included Adult Health Hero Sherri Massie, an HIV-positive woman who works to inform her community about HIV prevention and about the realities of living with HIV; Youth Health Hero Jeremy Ricondo, a Minico High School student who was the first youth member of the Rupert City Council; and the Twin Falls Lions Club, selected as the Corporate Health Hero for their work to help people in the Twin Falls area, especially children, receive the vision care they would otherwise not be able to afford.

Honorees in 2001 included Adult Health Hero Dr. David McClusky, long-time Twin Falls physician and surgeon; Youth Health Hero Shaylee O’Connor of Buhl, for her role in the Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition; and Corporate Health Hero KMVT Television, for their support of the Youth Asset Building Initiative by providing production and airtime for youth-generated public service announcements. Award winners in 2000 included Jan Mittleider, Associate Professor of Physical Education and Wellness Coordinator at CSI, and Lauri Bailey and her students at the Cassia County Education Center in Burley. In 1999, Con Paulos and Subway Sandwiches received the award for providing healthy fast food alternatives.